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Colby: U.S. Could Spot SALT II Violations

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Former CIA director William Colby said here Saturday that U.S. intelligence agencies have the capability to verify Soviet compliance with the proposed SALT II treaty.

"The warning systems are good enough so that we would certainly be alerted soon enough to react in time if the Soviet Union tried to get any strategic advantage," Colby said before addressing a Law Day luncheon at Emory University.

In effect, Colby, CIA head from 1973 to 1976, joined a debate that has become more heated as the United States and the Soviet Union reportedly draw near a final agreement on arms limitation.

Several members of the Senate, which must ratify the treaty before it becomes official U.S. policy, have voiced doubts whether the United States could determine whether the Soviets are keeping to their end of whatever bargain is agreed upon, especially without the aid of two monitoring bases recently lost during the

upheavals in Iran.

Colby said the debate should not sink into "pettifoggery" about whether "every single violation" could be seen by U.S. satellites or other equipment. Instead, Colby said, what matters is the detection of serious violations posing a threat to U.S. security.

He also defended CIA involvement in the political affairs of other countries.

"There are some situations today where some quiet American assistance to parties within some foreign countries would be a good thing," Colby said. He specifically mentioned southern Africa and the Persian Gulf.

A group of law students distributed leaflets saying they were boycotting the luncheon to protest Colby's involvement with the Phoenix program during the Vietnam war. They said the program, the covert side of President Nixon's "pacification" project for the Vietnam countryside, was responsible for the deaths of more than 20,000 people, many of them Vietnamese civilians.

Colby, director of the CIA during the

Nixon and Ford administrations, denied the Phoenix program led to widespread torture and murder, though he acknowledged smaller abuses.

In his address, Colby conceded an agreement reached after the first round of Strategic Arms Limitation talks "hadn't reduced the weaponry very much." He speculated that SALT II also would have no dramatic effect on the nuclear arms buildup.

"But it's a step toward the next stage of actually reducing arms in SALT and hopefully SALT IV and SALT V," said.

Colby said that money that would be spent toward nuclear arms if the agreement is not ratified would be better spent on conventional arms and aiding the very poor in Third World nations, where "social and economic turmoil" pose a threat to world security.

"The most successful Soviet weapon during the past years has been the transport plane full of Cuban troops and arms," he said.



William Colby